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## HOW WILL A FLU PANDEMIC DIFFER FROM AN OUTBREAK OF “ORDINARY” OR SEASONAL FLU?

It is difficult to say just how serious a pandemic will be. It depends on how easily the particular virus spreads, which age groups are affected most, the severity of the symptoms it produces, and how many deaths it causes.

A flu pandemic may occur in waves several months apart, with each wave lasting two to three months.

It is likely that pandemic flu will affect far more people than “ordinary” or seasonal flu. Around a quarter of the population may be affected by the end of the pandemic.

**The vaccine against “ordinary” or seasonal flu WILL NOT protect against a new pandemic flu.**

However “ordinary” or seasonal flu can be serious so it is very important that individuals at high risk receive their annual flu shot.

## IS IT A COLD OR THE FLU?

| SYMPTOM                           | COLD   | FLU  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Fever                             | Rare in adults and older children, but can be as high as 102°F in children and infants | Usually 102° F, but can go up to 104° F and usually last 3 to 4 days |
| Headache                          | Rare   | Sudden onset and can be severe                                       |
| Muscle Aches                      | Mild   | Usual, and often severe  |
| Tiredness and Weakness            | Mild   | Often extreme and can last 2 or more weeks                           |
| Runny nose, sneezing, sore throat | Often  | Sometimes  |
| Cough                             | Mild hacking cough   | Usual and can be severe  |

# PANDEMIC FLU

*Important information for  
you and your family from the  
Department of Public  
Health and Social Service*





## WHAT IS PANDEMIC FLU?

Pandemic flu is a type of influenza that occurs every few decades and which spreads rapidly to affect most countries and regions around the world. The symptoms of pandemic flu are similar to those of “ordinary” or seasonal flu but are usually more severe.

## HOW DOES A FLU PANDEMIC START?

Flu viruses are constantly changing, producing new strains. Pandemics occur when a virus develops that is so different from previously circulating strains that few, if any, people have any immunity to it. This allows the virus to spread widely and rapidly, affecting many hundreds of thousands of people.

A new pandemic virus may emerge through the mixing (recombination) of human flu virus with an animal flu virus such as a bird (avian) flu virus.

## HOW IS THE VIRUS SPREAD?

The virus is easily passed from person to person by breathing in air from an infected person when he/she talks, coughs, or sneezes. It can also be spread through hand/face contact after touching a person or surface contaminated with the virus.

## FACTS ABOUT PANDEMIC FLU:

- ◆ Pandemic flu spreads very rapidly because people have no immunity.
- ◆ Pandemic flu is likely to be more severe than “ordinary” or seasonal flu.
- ◆ Groups at particular risk won’t be known until the disease starts to circulate – they may be different (it may not affect all age groups equally).

## HOW CAN I PROTECT MY FAMILY AND MYSELF?

The flu virus is spread through the air when people cough or sneeze. There are some basic measures that you can take to reduce the risk of infection.

- ◆ Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue whenever possible.
- ◆ Dispose of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.
- ◆ Avoid non-essential travel and large crowds whenever possible.
- ◆ Maintain good hygiene - washing hands frequently in soap and water after you sneeze/cough, using the bathroom, before and after you eat, before preparing nutritious meals/snacks, and

before you touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Doing so protects against picking the virus up from surfaces and passing it on.

- ◆ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, particularly after you have been in public places or gatherings.
- ◆ Stay away from others as much as possible if THEY are sick.
- ◆ If YOU are sick, stay home from work and school and see your health care provider.
- ◆ Get informed and be proactive in preventing the spread of the flu virus.
- ◆ Develop a planning checklist. For more information on what to include in your planning checklist visit the following websites.

Department of Public Health and Social Services  
[www.dphss.govguam.net](http://www.dphss.govguam.net)

US Department of Health and Human Services  
[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

World Health Organization  
[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)